

Co-chairs Senator McCrory and Representative Currey, Ranking Members Representative McCarty and Representative Berthel, and distinguished members of the Education Committee:

My name is James Ramsey and I am a resident of New Haven, Connecticut. I am testifying in support of S.B. 1095: An Act Concerning School Resource Officers.

All students deserve to feel safe, secure, and supported in their places of learning. Yet, too often our schools rely on policing to keep children in line, rather than funding professionals trained to deliver students necessary developmental and behavioral health resources.

Criminalization is not the same thing as safety. However, by definition, police officers, of which School Resource Officers are a subset, exist primarily to criminalize. In many cases, police officers are either responding to a disturbance or situation that has already occurred with an arrest or creating a disturbance where there need not have been one (after all, what could be more distracting than a student being put in handcuffs, dragged out of classrooms, and surveilled in an environment meant for learning?).¹ And, of course, as is confirmed by data, these are always racialized patterns; Black and brown students are disproportionately affected by this system of policing, suffering higher arrest rates, expulsion rates, and rates of disrupted learning than their white counterparts.²

Additionally, to the extent that students do experience or exhibit behaviors that impact their ability or the ability of others to learn in a safe environment, police and the criminal legal system are never sustainable solutions to those problems, nor do they adequately intervene in the root causes of those problems. Research tells us that it is ambiguous whether or not police have a deterrent effect on things broadly labeled as “crime,” whereas other interventions—adequate food, housing, supporting mental and emotional health, peer accountability and conflict resolution, etc.—have been repeatedly proven to go much further toward facilitating healthy habits and communities.³ And logically—and empathetically—students are children. Children should not be threatened into compliance by armed agents of the state; they should be held and supported in all of their complexities and challenges, and they should be given grace in their imperfections without the specter of imprisonment and/or force. I agree with the basic premise that children should be safe at schools; the ever-present threat of state violence is not safety, especially when students are, by design, the ones bearing the physical and psychological brunt of that (threat of) violence.⁴

In summary, and according to the extensive research by [Connecticut Voices for Children](#) cited above, there’s little to no evidence School Resource Officers (SROs) make students or staff safer, but schools with SROs have more arrests and more expulsions than their peer institutions without SROs.

¹ <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-better-path-forward-for-criminal-justice-reconsidering-police-in-schools/>

² <https://ctvoices.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/SRO-Just-Facts-FINAL.pdf>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/08/us/police-crime.html>

⁴ <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1808976116>

I strongly support S.B. 1095. I hope the Committee and Connecticut lawmakers will vote in favor of this bill. Together, we can build an educational system that centers the social-emotional well-being of students through care, resources, learning, and restoration.

Thank you for your time,
James Ramsey